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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 52 of Security Council resolution 2348 (2017). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the issuance of my previous report, of 2 October (S/2017/824). The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); provides an overview of political developments following my report of 17 November on the implementation of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of 31 December 2016 (see S/2017/963); and provides a report on the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. Deep divisions among political and civil society actors have continued to characterize the political climate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the reporting period. On 5 November, the Independent National Electoral Commission published an electoral calendar officially postponing the presidential and legislative elections scheduled to take place by December 2017, in accordance with the agreement of 31 December 2016, until 23 December 2018. This prompted renewed calls for demonstrations against the President, Joseph Kabila, and the Government by most opposition leaders and several civil society organizations. On 15 and 30 November and 19 December, however, these calls were only marginally followed in urban centres across the country, as authorities continued to impose a ban on public demonstrations and to deploy the security forces prior to public protests. On 31 December, national security forces violently dispersed demonstrations called for by the Secular Coordination Committee in Kinshasa and other cities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in at least 5 deaths, 46 people wounded and over 140 arrests. The call of the Committee for protests to demand the full implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016, including confidence-building measures, to reject the electoral calendar and to urge President Kabila not to run for office on 23 December 2018 was supported by the Catholic Church and opposition groups. In contrast, both the President's Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la democratie

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and the Government appears determined to proceed with the implementation of the electoral calendar.

3. On 7 November, President Kabila led a meeting of the leadership of his party to discuss its approach and strategy for the upcoming elections. On 14 November, the Government swiftly endorsed two draft bills critical for the holding of elections. The first is the 2018 finance bill, subsequently adopted by parliament on 14 December, which allocates a total of $619 million for the organization of elections, of which $532 million is to be disbursed to the Independent National Electoral Commission. The second is the electoral law, adopted by parliament on 15 December, despite the protests of the opposition and a few members of parliament belonging to the ruling majority, who lamented that the bill would reduce the likelihood of small political parties and independent candidates gaining seats in the future legislative elections. Women's organizations also protested that the electoral bill did not improve women's chances of being elected in parliament, including by rejecting a proposal to ensure that women hold 30 per cent of the seats at the end of the upcoming legislative elections; a percentage which remains below the full parity enshrined in the Constitution. On 24 December, President Kabila signed both bills.

4. On a related note, and in an apparent effort to help improve the pre-electoral climate, on 21 November, the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process announced that it was working towards the release of additional political prisoners. The Council is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016 and is led by Joseph Olenghankoy, an opposition figure. The body stated that it would follow up on the situation of five political figures, who have become targets of judicial proceedings, political prisoners or under the heavy surveillance of the security services. The Council also called on the Government to respect people's right to hold protests and their freedom of movement, in compliance with the Constitution. Lastly, the Council called on all political actors to preserve peace during the pre-electoral period.

5. On 27 November, the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo urged President Kabila to announce publicly that, in conformity with the Constitution, he would not seek a third term in office and urged him to support the implementation of the confidence-building measures required by the agreement of 31 December 2016. The Conference stressed the need for the Independent National Electoral Commission to remain independent and recommended that all political parties use only democratic means as they compete for public office. Lastly, the Conference called on civil society groups to remain apolitical and urged the international community to provide logistical and financial support to the electoral process.

6. During the reporting period, progress towards the implementation of the confidence-building measures has remained insufficient. In November, in response to calls by the opposition and civil society groups for public protests across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the authorities reiterated the general ban on opposition demonstrations, which has been in place since September 2016. During the protests of 30 November, one person was killed, 18 were injured and 185 were arrested in various incidents between protesters and security forces across the country. Opposition leaders arrested prior to or on the day of the protests have since been released.

7. Meanwhile, voter registration proceeded in Kasai and Kasai Central provinces as well as two territories in Lomami Province, with support from MONUSCO. As at early December, the Independent National Electoral Commission reported more than 45 million registered voters countrywide. Despite reassurances by the Commission, it is unlikely that voter registration will be completed by the end of January 2018.

Women constitute 47 per cent of registered voters, a decrease as compared with previous electoral cycles (52 per cent for 2006 and 2011). In the aforementioned provinces and territories, the registration of women has to date been even lower, owing to the security situation. With MONUSCO support, the Commission and local authorities are taking steps to increase the registration of women in the Kasai region.

8. Following the publication of the electoral calendar, discussions have resumed between the Independent National Electoral Commission and international partners regarding the funding of the *Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo*, a multi-partner basket fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme. The fund has remained funded at only 6 per cent of the $123.3 million initially identified, in part owing to donor concerns regarding uncertainties surrounding the political transition.

9. On 6 November, the Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo convened the inaugural meeting of the joint team of electoral experts, as agreed on the margins of the general debate of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly in September. The team's main task is to support the Independent National Electoral Commission. It comprises experts of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Southern Africa Development Community.

10. At the regional level, on 7 November, the African Union Peace and Security Council reiterated its commitment to support the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and urged its member States and partners to provide their support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the successful completion of the electoral process. On 9 December, President Kabila, the President of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, and the President of the Republic of Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, met in Brazzaville to discuss the situation in the region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, they called on political actors to preserve peace and work towards the holding of elections.

11. MONUSCO continues to support the implementation of the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. On 22 November, my Special Representative, together with my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, attended a meeting of representatives of the Framework guarantors and the region in Addis Ababa to review preparations for elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and discuss coordinated regional and international support. The guarantors reaffirmed their commitment to support a democratic and peaceful transition through credible elections and called on all stakeholders to create the necessary conditions for the holding of timely, peaceful and credible elections.

B. Economic developments

12. The downward macroeconomic trend persisted. Inflation remained high and the Congolese franc has depreciated by 30 per cent since January 2017. The exchange rate increased to 1,614 Congolese francs to the dollar in early December, from 1,560 at the end of July. On 2 November, the Banque centrale du Congo lowered its year-end inflation forecast to 49.8 per cent, from an earlier estimate of more than 52 per cent. The institution cautioned that any loosening of the tight monetary policy and austerity measures could trigger a renewed acceleration of inflation.

C. Security situation

13. During the reporting period, the security situation continued to deteriorate across various areas of the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while some measure of stability was noted in most of the western part of the country despite persistent tensions in the Kasai region.

14. In the East, the reporting period was tragically marked by the deadliest ever attack by an armed group against United Nations peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 7 December, in Semuliki, North Kivu, which resulted in the killing of 15 peacekeepers from Tanzania. Forty-four peacekeepers were also injured during the attack, attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). After a lull in their activities, ADF has resumed their attacks in the area, including against civilians. On 22 December, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence and Veterans' Affairs of Uganda issued a communiqué indicating that, on that day, the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), following consultations with Congolese authorities, had conducted a "surgical attack" on ADF camps in Beni territory. UPDF reportedly conducted the strike on the ADF camps from Ugandan territory in the border area. On 27 December, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence and Veterans' Affairs of Uganda issued a statement, indicating that the 22 December strikes of UPDF had successfully targeted eight ADF camps, resulting in the deaths of some 100 ADF elements and several wounded. In addition, the trend of attacks by armed groups against the Congolese security forces has persisted, leading to more deadly clashes, particularly in the two Kivu provinces. This has taken place against the backdrop of an emergence of coalitions of Mai-Mai groups opposed to the Government. In North Kivu, the most important Mai-Mai platforms are the Mouvement national pour le renouveau, composed mainly of ethnic Nande-affiliated Mai-Mai groups, and the *Collectif des mouvements pour le changement* (CMC), comprising Hutu-affiliated Nyatura groups. In South Kivu, the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo, led by Mai-Mai Yakutumba has so far rallied 11 armed groups. The coalition is also present in Tanganyika and Maniema provinces. Attacks by armed groups against the civilian population have persisted, as have clashes between armed groups. Inter-community tensions have also persisted in certain areas.

Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

15. In North Kivu, attacks by armed groups against security forces continued. On 3 October, in Kipese, Lubero territory, three soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) were killed during an exchange of fire with Mai-Mai combatants. On 4 October, the FARDC killed 10 Mai-Mai Mazembe in Kanyambi and Kitsambiro. On 6 October, a group of Mai-Mai attacked a FARDC position at Kawasewe, 35 km east of Butembo. One FARDC soldier was killed and three were wounded. On 11 October, a coalition of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda/Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) and Nyatura attacked Bwiza, Rutshuru territory, killing three officers of the Congolese National Police and five civilians.

16. In a worrisome development, suspected members of ADF resumed their attacks against civilians and FARDC. On 7 October, suspected ADF killed 25 civilians on the road between Mbau and Kamango. The suspected ADF also launched a series of attacks against FARDC positions in and around the so-called ADF triangle area. On 26 and 27 October and 3 November, alleged ADF attacked FARDC positions north-east of Beni town. As a result of these attacks, in early November, FARDC deployed around 1,000 additional troops to the area.

17. On 6 October, a Mai-Mai group attacked a MONUSCO base in Mulo, Lubero territory. Two peacekeepers were wounded, three assailants were killed and one was injured. On 9 October, suspected ADF elements attacked a MONUSCO base in Mamudioma. A total of 2 peacekeepers from Tanzania were killed and 18 injured, one of whom died later from his injuries. On 7 December, in the most vicious attacks against United Nations peacekeepers in recent memory, suspected ADF elements killed 15 United Nations peacekeepers from Tanzania and injured 44 at their base in Semuliki, 40 km east of Beni, in North Kivu.

18. Also in North Kivu, in particular in Masisi and in Rutshuru territories, inter-ethnic tensions persisted. In Masisi, on 2 October, Nyatura clashed with members of the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain in Rubaya and took control of the village, displacing the local population. MONUSCO deployed to protect civilians and five Nyatura were captured by FARDC. In Rutshuru, on 16 October, growing tensions between Hutu and Nande resulted in 32 houses being set on fire in Bambo village. MONUSCO deployed and relocated 28 Nande residents as a precautionary measure.

19. In South Kivu, following their failed attempt to take over the city of Uvira at the end of September, thanks to the actions of MONUSCO and FARDC, members of Mai-Mai Yakutumba have remained active in the interior of the province, especially around the mining areas, and along the borders with Tanganyika and Maniema provinces. In late November, the group repeatedly clashed with FARDC soldiers, including on 26 November in Tujenge, 109 km south-west of Uvira. Two FARDC soldiers were killed. Clashes have also taken place between FARDC and a coalition of Mai-Mai groups in Makola, Maï-Ndombe and Kahungwe, all three villages located between 120 km and 130 km from Uvira.

20. In Tanganyika, attacks by armed groups have increased. Between 7 October and 14 November, members of Mai-Mai Yakutumba and their allies (Mai-Mai Malaika, Mai-Mai Apa Na Pole and Twa militias) staged nine attacks against civilians in Kalemie, Nyunzu and Kongolo territories, in which 15 FARDC soldiers and 9 civilians were killed; 4 FARDC and 13 civilians were injured.

21. In Haut-Katanga, the Twa-Luba conflict spilled over into Pweto territory, with intensified attacks against the civilian population and security forces. On 7 October, a Bantu militia known as the Tabwa attacked the prison in Pweto town, resulting in the escape of 55 prisoners, while reportedly killing three FARDC soldiers and wounding two others. On 16 October, local militia groups burned down offices of the Congolese National Police and the Agence nationale de renseignements in Fube, south of Moba. On 28 October, suspected Twa militia killed five civilians in Kalembe, west of Pweto. On 30 October, suspected Twa militia attacked a Luba militia in Kasanbala village, north-west of Moba, which resulted in civilians fleeing towards Zambia. On 1 November, Twa militia reportedly attacked civilians in Kansabala and Mwashi villages, north of Pweto. Two civilians were killed.

22. In Ituri Province, the Force de resistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) remained the main source of insecurity and posed the greatest threat to civilians, accounting for 80 per cent of human rights violations documented in the south of Irumu territory, including mass rape, summary executions and sexual assault. There was a sharp increase of FRPI attacks against the Congolese security forces, in which four FARDC soldiers were killed. FARDC and MONUSCO conducted two coordinated operations against FRPI in the south of Irumu territory in October and November, resulting in the killing of three FRPI elements.

23. In Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé provinces, activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have decreased as the poaching season in Garamba National Park has ended, although LRA still poses a threat to the civilian population. Mbororo herders'

activities continued to cause inter-community tensions as the movement of their cattle destroys crops, stoking conflict with local communities. Refugees continued to arrive in the area from both the Central African Republic and South Sudan, amid continued allegations of the infiltration of armed elements from South Sudan.

Western Democratic Republic of the Congo

24. In the Kasai region, attacks committed by Kamuina Nsapu militia have decreased, leading FARDC to halt major military operations. However, human rights violations and abuses continue to be recorded. During the reporting period, several cases of rape involving FARDC elements in the Kasai provinces were documented. On 26 October 2017, in Tshikapa, Kamonia territory, Kasai province, four women were raped by four FARDC soldiers. On 10 November 2017, three women were raped by two men in FARDC uniforms in Kakumba, also in Kamonia territory. On 30 November, MONUSCO received reports of mass killings in Kamonia territory, Kasai Province. MONUSCO investigation teams deployed to the area and verified that FARDC soldiers had shot at a crowd at the market in Kabeya Lumbu on 30 November, killing at least 13 persons, including 5 women. Eight other persons were injured by gunshots, including four women. Two of the injured later died. Across Kasai Province, Kamonia remains the main area of insecurity with a residual presence of Kamuina Nsapu militia and Bana Mura armed groups. The persistence of these community-based armed groups is compounding the divisions between Luba on one side and the Chokwe and Pende communities on the other. This is also hampering the return of internally displaced persons. Likewise, the persisting tensions among communities are slowing the pace of voter registration in Kasai Central and in Kasai.

25. In Kasai Central, most of the security incidents during the reporting period were attributed to security forces, including allegations of extrajudicial killings and sexual violence. On 13 November, in Kazumba territory, Kasai Central, an intoxicated FARDC soldier shot at a crowd, killing a man and injuring two other people. He was reportedly arrested.

Humanitarian situation

26. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to deteriorate. As at early December, 4.1 million people were internally displaced, including 866,000 women and 2.44 million children. Over 622,000 Congolese nationals have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, including 100,000 this year. The country hosts more than half a million refugees from neighbouring Burundi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and South Sudan. Some 7.7 million people face severe food insecurity — a 30 per cent increase on the same time last year. An estimated 13.1 million people, including 6.8 million women and girls and 7.9 million children, will need protection and humanitarian assistance in 2018, an increase of 50 per cent as compared with 2017. In response, humanitarian partners are rapidly scaling up their efforts, with a focus on the Kasai, Tanganyika and South Kivu crises. On 20 October, the Emergency Relief Coordinator declared that the situation in these areas has reached its highest level of emergency, also known as level 3. Such a declaration is made when the aid system needs to scale up and respond to large-scale needs.

Human rights situation

27. MONUSCO documented 2,049 human rights violations from September to November, a significant increase as compared with the 1,329 documented from June to August. More than 70 per cent of these human rights violations occurred in conflict-affected provinces. While State agents were responsible for 1,293 violations, armed groups perpetrated 756. The increase in extrajudicial and arbitrary killings remains of

great concern. Of 710 victims recorded throughout the country, 284, including 47 women and 12 children, were killed by armed groups, and 426, including 38 women and 33 children, by State agents.

28. The trend of restrictions on the political space continued, with 482 violations linked to fundamental freedoms and political rights documented, almost double compared with 247 such violations in the previous reporting period. Almost all were committed by State agents (477, including 272 by the Congolese National Police and 91 by FARDC). Over 98 per cent of the perpetrators of these violations enjoyed impunity. Journalists, political opponents and civil society activists were the main targets of such violations.

29. A general ban on public demonstration by opposition parties and pro-opposition civil society actors continues to be enforced throughout the country. On 15 November, in the context of protests called by civil society groups and opposition parties, a strong deployment of FARDC and the Congolese National Police prevented public gatherings. Incidents occurred in Kinshasa, Goma, Kasindi (Beni territory, North Kivu), Matadi (Kongo Central), Kisangani (Tshopo), Kindu (Maniema) and Kananga (Kasai Central), with defence and security forces injuring at least 3 persons and arresting 77 others, including at least one woman and two children. Most of those arrested were later released, while seven remained in detention. On 18 November, Congolese National Police agents disrupted the inauguration of an opposition political party, Ensemble des volontaires pour le redressement de la République démocratique du Congo (ENVOL)/Alternance pour la République, in Kenge, Kwango Province. The National Civil Police clashed with supporters of the party. One party member was injured and four were arrested.

30. No significant progress has been achieved with regard to accountability of the defence and security forces for abuses and use of excessive force against protestors during previous demonstrations. A year after the 19 December 2016 protests, during which 40 people were killed, none of the alleged perpetrators has been brought to justice. On 4 October, in Kimpese (Kongo Central), two senior police officers were convicted for the murder of members of the Bundu Dia Kongo/Bundu Dia Mayala movement, in connection with their responsibility in the repression of a protest held in February 2017.

31. MONUSCO continued to support the Congolese authorities' efforts to address serious human rights violations and fight impunity. Following the Mission's advocacy efforts, in collaboration with the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, progress was made on some of the 38 priority cases jointly identified with military justice authorities. In Kavumu, South Kivu Province, 18 persons, including a provincial deputy, were tried for crimes against humanity for the abduction and rape of 38 girls. On 13 December, the Court handed down life sentences to 12 of the accused. The court awarded reparations to victims. MONUSCO and its partners assisted the Congolese military justice authorities in developing a prosecutorial strategy for the trial, together with a protection plan for victims and witnesses, and provided security and logistical support for the mobile court hearings.

32. Following this assistance by MONUSCO, the military justice authorities in the Kasai region began addressing cases involving alleged FARDC perpetrators, rather than focusing exclusively on armed groups. MONUSCO-supported joint investigation missions with the military justice resulted in the indictment of 13 FARDC soldiers, including a lieutenant-colonel and a major, in Kipese, North Kivu Province, who allegedly perpetrated conflict-related sexual violence against more than 300 victims. The investigation is ongoing and the military prosecutor in Beni plans to try the suspects at the military court in Beni. In September, the Operational Military Court in Beni issued its first judicial decision in relation to child recruitment.

33. The number of applications from MONUSCO and the United Nations country team to perform risk assessments in accordance with the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy increased during the reporting period, partly as a consequence of country team support for Government security forces now also requiring clearance under the Policy. United Nations police set up an internal human rights due diligence policy task force to enhance observance of the Policy, particularly as regards the implementation of mitigating measures.

Sexual violence

34. Between September and November, the Mission documented 254 victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including 149 women and 66 children. Armed groups were responsible for 75 per cent of such incidents, while State agents were responsible for 25 per cent. The main perpetrators include FARDC and Bana Mura militia in the Kasai region (18 per cent of the victims) and FARDC. Sexual violence survivors still encounter limitations in holistic service provision.

Child protection

35. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 929 grave violations against children throughout the reporting period, a 34 per cent increase as compared with the previous reporting period. At least 650 children, including 177 girls, escaped or were separated from armed groups. The increasing number of surrenders by Kamuina Nsapu militia allowed the separation of several children. However, there are more than 1,700 allegations of child recruitment that have still to be verified. The main armed groups involved in the recruitment of children were the Kamuina Nsapu (339), Mai-Mai Mazembe (69), Mai-Mai Yakutumba (30) and Nduma défense du Congo-Renové (NDC-R) (24).

36. MONUSCO also documented the killing of 40 children and the maiming of 57, solely in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Kasai Central and Kasai, with more than half of these incidents (56 per cent) perpetrated by State agents. The abduction of 78 children, mostly by Mai-Mai Mazembe and ADF, and 24 attacks against schools, mostly by FARDC, Mai-Mai Mazembe and NDC-R were also verified.

III. Deployment of the Mission and implementation of its mandate

A. Support for the implementation of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of 31 December 2016

37. My Special Representative continued his good offices in support of the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016, at the national level and in key provinces, with a particular focus on promoting the implementation of the confidence-building measures envisaged in the agreement and the creation of a political environment conducive to the holding of peaceful and credible elections. In this context, he met with leaders of the opposition platform known as the Groupe des sept partis politiques, the Governor of Haut-Katanga and the Governor of Tanganyika.

38. On 9 November, my Special Representative, jointly with my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Said Djinnit, met with the Chair of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, and the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Smail Chergui to discuss the coordination of those organizations'

support for the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 13 and 14 November, in Gaborone, my Special Representative held consultations with the Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and exchanged respectively with the incoming Chair of SADC, the President of Namibia, Hage Geingob, and the Special Envoy of SADC to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

39. On 14 November, a day before the demonstrations planned by civil society groups and the opposition, my Special Representative issued a statement urging the Congolese authorities to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, including the freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, while also reiterating the need for protestors to refrain from violence.

B. Comprehensive approach to protection of civilians

40. The MONUSCO Community Alert Network transmitted an average of 570 early warning alerts per month, which constitutes a 17 per cent increase over the previous reporting period. Of the 486 alerts reported in North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika, the Government and/or MONUSCO responded to 74 per cent. Most of the alerts to which there had been no response were in areas with limited State authority or which were difficult to access.

41. MONUSCO has now concentrated two battalions of its Intervention Brigade battalions in Sake and Munigi, North Kivu, for projection throughout the country as required. The Mission has also finalized the realignment of its sectors, resulting in the establishment of four sectors covering the entire country, thus allowing for greater flexibility for redeployment of troops.

42. MONUSCO continued actions to neutralize armed groups as well as protect civilians. Overall, MONUSCO conducted 29 military operations, including temporary standing combat deployments and coordinated operations with FARDC against FDLR, ADF and FRPI, to neutralize armed groups and deter violence against the civilian population. MONUSCO also supported explosive ordnance disposal operations, through the Mine Action Service, to ensure that areas were safe for the local population, including by responding to all requests for explosive hazard management support during the reporting period.

43. In response to the massacre of 25 civilians on 7 October by suspected ADF, MONUSCO supported air access to the remote area where the incident had taken place for a joint assessment team composed of MONUSCO, local authorities, including the military prosecutor, and medical specialists to document the killings. MONUSCO also continued coordinated military operations with FARDC against ADF in the area, with support from attack helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles, to push ADF back from the positions they had taken from FARDC, within the context of the broader protection plan developed by the Mission to address the re-emerging ADF threat to the civilian population. To overcome the difficult conditions its peacekeepers face in the ADF area of operations, including poor road access, especially during the rainy season, MONUSCO has been rehabilitating a strategic road to enable improved access for military operations, access to civilian populations in need of protection and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

44. Since the attack against its peacekeepers on 7 December, the Mission has reinforced its presence at the Semuliki base with a composite task force comprising one South African platoon, two Malawian platoons and a Tanzanian special forces platoon (121 soldiers). The neighbouring Kamango base, deemed to be at potential risk, has been similarly reinforced. A section of Force engineers has been deployed in Semuliki to commence close support field engineering tasks. Additional attack

helicopter and utility helicopter assets have been positioned at Mavivi to undertake close support missions as required.

45. In South Kivu, the successful defence of Uvira by MONUSCO, alongside FARDC, from an attack by Mai-Mai Yakutumba in late September was critical for the protection of civilians and an important demonstration of the determination of MONUSCO to act to protect civilians. MONUSCO established blocking positions at the entry points to the town, succeeded in repelling an attack on the city's prison and provided support from attack helicopters, which managed to destroy the boat fleet of Mai-Mai Yakutumba. MONUSCO also communicated directly with Yakutumba, the group's leader, to dissuade him from attacking the town and made it clear that MONUSCO would act to protect civilians. Since then, MONUSCO has enhanced its engagement and liaison with local actors and communities with regard to threats to civilians in the Uvira and Fizi territories, where attacks on State institutions by Mai Mai Yakutumba remain of concern. MONUSCO is also monitoring Yakutumba's expansion into mining areas in Maniema Province, which could provide an important source of funding to the armed group, and is addressing this risk with the authorities and mining companies.

46. Following recent base closures in North Kivu, MONUSCO is implementing mitigating measures and enhancing community-based mechanisms to improve the protective environment and early warning in these areas. This engagement includes building the capacity in communities to integrate gender perspectives into mechanisms to protect civilians, increase the involvement of women in local protection committees and alert networks and, going forward, better take account of women's security needs and capabilities. MONUSCO has strengthened community engagement through joint capacity-building sessions with the Ministry of Interior of the province in all four locations where the Mission used to have bases. Rapidly deployable battalion troops established a presence in several locations in these areas to assess the security situation after the closure of the bases and to respond to protection needs. Joint actions by the Mission's civilian and military components are a tangible expression of the comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians and a step towards the implementation of the protection through projection concept.

47. During the reporting period, MONUSCO continued to support local conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly in Tanganyika Province, by establishing two additional intercommunal peace forums in Kalemie and Moba territories to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent and mitigate violence between the Bantu and Twa communities. In North Kivu, MONUSCO supported mediation efforts between the Nande and Hutu communities in Kanyabayonga and Mirangi. These efforts, supported by the Mission and led by provincial authorities, civil society and communities, contributed to a reduction in tensions. In South Kivu, following the fighting in early November among soldiers in relation to the arrest in Bukavu of Abbas Kayonga, a former rebel leader and a prominent member of the Banyamulenge community, who had integrated FARDC as a colonel, MONUSCO has continued to engage with local authorities and communities to reduce the risk of an escalation of tensions.

48. In response to the increase in attacks against prisons resulting in mass escapes of prisoners who, in some cases, have subsequently joined armed groups, MONUSCO is providing support to 14 high-risk prisons housing prisoners who, if freed, would pose a serious threat to local populations. These prisons are located in Kinshasa, North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Haut-Katanga, Tanganyika, Mongala and Kongo Central provinces. Action plans for each prison are being developed, which includes targeted advocacy with authorities to address overcrowding. Advocacy in relation to the Goma prison has already resulted in the transfer of 153 prisoners to prisons in Kinshasa and Equateur Province, as well as the transfer of 486 military prisoners to the former Goma prison, which has now been

rehabilitated. MONUSCO also successfully repelled attacks against the prisons in Uvira, South Kivu and Butembo, North Kivu.

49. MONUSCO has continued to enhance its preparedness to address political and electoral-related violence, including in urban centres. MONUSCO reviewed and, where necessary, revised its contingency plans in the electoral context in all field offices and Kinshasa. The Mission also reinforced the capacities of 384 civil society members in Kinshasa, Goma and Lubumbashi, supporting 21 civil society campaigns in promotion of a peaceful electoral process.

Disarmament, demobilization repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

50. During the reporting period, MONUSCO registered 263 surrenders from armed groups, accompanied by 176 dependants. Of these, 81 foreign ex-combatants and 154 dependants were repatriated to Rwanda within the framework of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement programme for foreign armed groups. A total of 86 Congolese combatants entered phase III of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The Mission received and transferred 76 Congolese and two foreign children associated with armed groups to partner organizations.

51. MONUSCO continued to provide logistical support to the Government-run third national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme ex-combatant reintegration camps of Kamina and Kitona. MONUSCO also continued to support 293 former combatants (including one female) and 1073 dependants (8 men, 242 women, 419 boys and 404 girls) of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) accommodated in the camps of Kanyabayonga and Walungu, as well as the Government-managed camp in Kisangani.

52. During the reporting period, 219 members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (in Opposition) (SPLM/A-in Opposition) have departed MONUSCO camps for various destinations, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and the United States of America. The Mission continues to work on finding options for the relocation of the 408 SPLM/A-in Opposition remaining under MONUSCO care. The Mine Action Service ensured the destruction and disposal of weapons and ammunition surrendered by these former combatants.

53. MONUSCO is expanding community violence reduction programmes across eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 21 reinsertion projects targeting former combatants, 12 projects targeting marginalized youth and prevention of recruitment into armed groups and 4 projects promoting community cohesion through temporary training and employment, as well as public outreach activities.

Stabilization

54. MONUSCO supported the launch of two stabilization programmes in South Kivu Province during the reporting period, as part of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy. In total, five such programmes are now operational in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all financed through the Stabilization Coherence Fund, with a budget amounting to $21 million, 15 per cent of which is dedicated to gender mainstreaming.

55. MONUSCO also supported the establishment of a stabilization committee in south Irumu territory, Ituri Province. The committee is composed of local and national political actors, community leaders, civil society and women's organizations. Its objective is to help reduce the threat posed by FRPI, a local armed group, and resolve long-standing conflicts between local communities.

C. Assessment of the performance of uniformed Mission personnel in protecting civilians

56. During the reporting period, the Mission continued to monitor and evaluate on a regular basis the performance of the force, with a view to identifying areas requiring improvement. MONUSCO will continue to work closely with troop-contributing countries on this issue and will continue to update the Security Council on the matter.

57. A majority of the formed police units were found to be operationally ready and appropriately trained and overall performed well. The most recent monthly evaluation showed that some units continue to operate with unserviceable or expired equipment. The Mission is actively following up with police-contributing countries to address the issue.

D. Assessment of the Mission's gender responsiveness

58. During the reporting period, MONUSCO introduced the use of gender markers to assess the Mission's responsiveness to the needs of the female populations across its mandate priorities, in line with delivery on the women and peace and security mandate. The first data show that 78 per cent of MONUSCO sections and offices have developed gender-based analysis and 65 per cent have redirected their activities to benefit more and more women and girls.

59. Responding to the system-wide strategy on gender parity launched in September by the Secretary-General, the Special Representative, Maman Sidikou has issued a gender parity directive for MONUSCO, with a plan to bridge the parity gap and increase the proportion of women among international staff from, currently, 28 per cent to 34 per cent at the end of the cycle.

E. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

60. MONUSCO continued to implement a robust victim centred strategy in enforcing the United Nations zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. Three allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded during the reporting period. Two of these allegations involved minors. In total, 18 allegations were reported from January to early December 2017.

61. Community-based complaint networks have remained pivotal in the Mission's response in the areas of prevention, enforcement and remedial action. These networks, established in areas where the Mission has a significant presence, comprise 500 members, of whom 65 per cent are women. In coordination with service providers including the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund, the Mission has also strengthened the victims' assistance protocol to ensure that all victims are supported within 24 to 72 hours of receipt of an allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse.

IV. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

62. During the reporting period, 155 security- and safety-related incidents affecting United Nations staff, uniformed components, assets and operations, as well as international non-governmental organizations have been reported, as compared with 75 such incidents documented during the previous reporting period. These include 83 crime-related incidents; 12 cases linked to civil unrest, 45 hazard-related cases and

15 incidents documented in connection with armed conflict. The Mine Action Service delivered risk education on explosive hazards to 192 United Nations personnel.

V. Observations

63. A year ago, the signing of the landmark Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement on 31 December 2016 gave renewed hope to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A year later these hopes are yet to be realized. After being postponed once, in late 2016, the presidential and legislative elections that were meant to take place by the end of 2017, in accordance with the agreement of 31 December 2016, have once again been postponed, until 23 December 2018. I regret that the holding of these crucial elections, set to pave the way for the first ever peaceful transfer of power in the history of the country, has been delayed yet again. I nevertheless welcome the publication, on 5 November, of an electoral calendar by the Independent National Electoral Commission. I urge the Commission to abide by its calendar and spare no effort in finalizing the voter register, which has already fallen behind schedule, as soon as possible. The completion of this critical milestone should be promptly followed by the swift implementation of the other steps outlined in the calendar. I reiterate the readiness of MONUSCO and the United Nations system as a whole, in close coordination with the African Union, the European Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the Southern African Development Community and other partners, to continue to support the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in holding these elections.

64. In the current, politically polarized climate, there is a real risk that plans for the holding of the long-awaited polls could be derailed once again. In the absence of a genuine commitment by all parties concerned to work towards the holding of free, fair and credible elections, each passing day increases this risk. I call on all actors to work together to implement the agreement of 31 December 2016, which remains the only viable path out of the current political impasse. More than ever, the constructive engagement of all key stakeholders is needed to salvage the agreement.

65. I urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to do its utmost to steer the political transition towards a successful conclusion. I take note of its stated commitment to do so and of the positive steps it has taken in recent weeks by submitting to the parliament a bill to revise the electoral law and a budget for elections. I welcome the parliament's swift adoption of these laws. Beyond these steps, I encourage the Government to ensure that the Independent National Electoral Commission receives the financial support that it has been promised and to take the lead in devising and implementing a plan for the security of the elections. Once again, I call on the Government to lead the way in the implementation of the confidence-building measures envisaged in the agreement of 31 December 2016. I am concerned that no real progress has been achieved in this regard, as 107 political prisoners remain in detention and the harassment of political actors and civil society figures persists. No credible electoral process is possible in a context of harassment and repression. I welcome the decision of the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process to seek a solution to this fundamental issue and to contribute to a political climate conducive to credible elections.

66. At the same time, I am concerned by the consistent rejection by key opposition leaders of any engagement with the political process. If the voices that these leaders claim to represent are to be heard, they must be part of the solution. I call on them to regain the spirit of dialogue and compromise that led them to sign the agreement of

31 December 2016. Now is the time to heed the call of their people for peaceful, free, fair and credible elections.

67. I call on the international community to maintain a coordinated approach in support of the full implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016 to pave the way for elections. Regional partners and bilateral actors all have a vital contribution to make at this crucial juncture for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I take note of the consensus among international partners to support the electoral calendar. The coordinated support of the international community will be even more crucial in the coming months.

68. The precarious security situation prevailing in some parts of the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a source of deep concern. Against the backdrop of a deeply divided political landscape, armed groups in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have grown bolder. Attacks against security forces persist as armed groups form coalitions. This worrying trend must be addressed, principally through political means. I condemn the renewed attacks of the ADF armed group in North Kivu, including the killing of 25 civilians in November, the first since January 2017.

69. I reiterate my strong condemnation of the attacks against MONUSCO peacekeepers by armed groups, particularly ADF, which led to the killing of one peacekeeper in September, three peacekeepers in October and 15 in December, all from Tanzania. I renew my condolences to the Government and people of Tanzania for their loss. These attacks against peacekeepers are unacceptable. Heinous as they are, they will not deter the determination of the United Nations to continue assisting the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I call on the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to open investigations and bring the perpetrators to justice. In the meantime, I have decided to launch a special investigation to determine, with the participation of the Tanzanian authorities, the circumstances surrounding this attack and identify concrete measures required to prevent the recurrence of such incidents and ensure that the MONUSCO Force is optimally configured, equipped and trained to address the continued threat posed by ADF and other armed groups.

70. The safety of United Nations peacekeepers and other United Nations personnel is fundamental to the very concept of the United Nations. Following this dramatic incident, I have asked the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to urgently develop an action plan to enhance the safety and security of our peacekeepers in the implementation of their mandate.

71. I am deeply concerned that human rights violations and abuses continue to increase. The number of human rights violations perpetrated by State security forces is constantly rising. Over a year after a series of deadly clashes between protesters and security forces in relation to the holding of elections, none of the alleged perpetrators has been brought to justice. I urge the authorities to ensure accountability and bring all perpetrators to justice regardless of their affiliation or rank within the security forces. On a positive note, I welcome the end of the trial on 13 December for the rape of 38 girls which resulted in the sentencing of 12 of the accused to life sentences. This step against impunity is encouraging and must be followed by others.

72. I remain deeply distressed by the deteriorating humanitarian situation, which is expected to worsen further in coming months. I call on the Government to do its utmost to ensure a safe and secure environment for the population and I urge the donor community to extend its assistance to those in need.

73. I would like to thank my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Maman Sidikou, who completes his assignment in January 2018. I am

grateful for his leadership and dedication during his tenure. I would also like to thank all the personnel of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team for their tireless efforts under very challenging circumstances. In particular, I wish to highlight the bravery and determination of MONUSCO military and civilian personnel. I pay particular homage to the Tanzanian contingent, which has lost 18 of its soldiers in North Kivu Province since September. My deep appreciation also goes to the countries contributing troops and police to MONUSCO, to donor countries and to the regional and multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations that have continued to provide invaluable support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

MONUSCO
December 2017
MONUSCO Headquarters
Force Forward Headquarters
Brigade Headquarters
Sector Headquarters
Formed Police Unit
Logistics base
Military Sector boundary
International boundary
Provincial boundary
National capital
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
SOUTH SUDAN
UGANDA
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
RWANDA
BURUNDI
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
ZAMBIA
ANGOLA
CONGO
Bangui
Kinshasa
Brazzaville
Luanda
Lusaka
Kampala
Kigali
Bujumbura
Dodoma
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